

VZCZCXRO3882
OO RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHIL #4992/01 3271255

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3411
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHSH/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 0452
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 7806
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6764
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2299
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 1139
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1124
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2418
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 8153
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4140
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 2699
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 004992

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/23/2017

TAGS: PGOV PK PREL

SUBJECT: URGING THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO STAY ENGAGED ON
PAKISTAN

REF: ISLAMABAD 4864

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Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Summary and action request: Led by the European Commission, a growing number of European countries here are questioning their participation in election observer missions. Ambassador briefed her European counterparts November 22 (septel) to urge that they not take pre-emptive decisions that will limit the international community's ability to continue encouraging the government to return to constitutional normalcy. Post believes that recent events have made it more, not less, important to have as many independent observers in the field as possible. We support reprogramming funds to enhance the number of observers in the U.S. mission being organized by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and believe EU capitals should consider doing the same. We are also concerned about the domino effect of an EC cancellation will have on other nations' observer missions. Post requests that the Department instruct the U.S. Mission to the EU to urge that the EC stay engaged in promoting credible elections in Pakistan. End summary.

¶12. (C) At a November 20 meeting of the election "like minded" group of counterparts from mainly EU and Commonwealth countries (reftel), European Commission DCM Balthasar Benz indicated that the EC's stance on elections has hardened. He said that the Commissioner has suspended plans to send an EC election observer mission because of concern that the January 8 elections were to be held under a state of emergency. Benz added that the observer mission would likely be canceled if the state of emergency were not lifted sufficiently early in the campaign to allow for a free and fair election day. Benz proposed November 26 as a possible deadline because it is the last day Pakistan's Election Commission will accept candidates' nominations. (Note: The EC planned to send 15 long-term and approximately 150 short-term observers to monitor Pakistan's election. This is the largest independent observer mission planned.)

¶13. (C) At this news, Canada, Switzerland and Norway representatives responded that their small bilateral observer missions may be canceled because they were to be coordinated under the EC's umbrella. Privately, other countries, including Japan, are wondering in light of the EC decision if they should proceed with organizing their own bilateral observation missions. The Commonwealth's decision to suspend Pakistan also puts its observer mission in doubt.

¶14. (C) The USG has repeatedly told the government that the elections will not be credible if they are held under a state of emergency and have demanded that political detainees be released and media curbs lifted so that campaigning can proceed. The government has taken some steps in the right direction, including lifting the block on transmission of most television stations and releasing a significant number of detainees. The Supreme Court ruled November 22 to confirm Musharraf's re-election; therefore, he could resign as Chief of Army Staff and re-take the presidential oath of office as a civilian as early as this weekend. The Pakistan People's Party has begun to file candidate papers, making it less likely that it or other parties will boycott the elections.

¶15. (C) Thus, events may be moving slowly in the right direction, and it is presumptuous and short-sighted to pre-emptively withdraw international support for Pakistan's elections. Post believes that it is more, not less, important to have the maximum number of international observers on the ground on election day, and we are working to increase the number of U.S. observers in the DRL-funded IRI mission. We believe that EU capitals should support this and all efforts to make Pakistan's elections as credible as possible.

¶16. (C) Action request: Ambassador briefed her EU

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counterparts November 22 to urge that they remain engaged in democracy promotion by continuing to support election monitoring. Post requests the Department to instruct the U.S. Mission to the EU to send the same message. The EC should not suspend or cancel its election observation mission and should continue to press the government to lift the state of emergency so that credible elections can be held in January.

PATTERSON